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The situation in the Middle East

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Sixty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 23 August 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I transmit herewith Lebanon's response (see annex) to the allegations contained in the Israeli letter dated 20 August 2010 (S/2010/440) regarding Lebanese vessels that have been attempting to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 15, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nawaf **Salam**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 23 August 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On 20 August 2010, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations transmitted an official letter to Your Excellency which contained a number of falsehoods and slanders.

In refuting the Israeli allegations, Lebanon would like to clarify its position on a number of matters, the most important of which are the following:

- Lebanon condemns the siege imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip and calls on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to lift that siege immediately and unconditionally, and to open crossing points in order to allow the free movement of persons, goods and humanitarian assistance;
- The Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip is a blatant violation of international laws and norms, particularly international humanitarian law, and clearly threatens international peace and security. Israel bears complete responsibility for the siege and the humanitarian disaster that it will bring about;
- Lebanese law does not permit maritime vessels or craft to sail directly to ports under the control of the Israeli authorities, including the port of Gaza;
- Lebanon abides by the laws regulating the movement of vessels from its ports. It therefore cannot prevent any maritime vessel from setting sail for any port as long as the vessel, the persons on board and its destination are in compliance with Lebanese law, and the vessel observes the provisions of Lebanese maritime law;
- The Lebanese authorities inspect all maritime vessels leaving Lebanese territorial waters in order to ensure that they are not carrying prohibited cargo and that no unauthorized persons are on board. The Lebanese authorities grant maritime vessels and craft permission to leave as long as the destination, cargo and persons on board are in compliance with Lebanese law;
- Lebanon emphasizes the substance of the statement issued by the President of the Security Council on 1 June 2010, in which the Council stressed that the situation in Gaza was not sustainable and underscored the need for sustained and regular flow of goods and persons to Gaza as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza;
- Lebanon holds Israel responsible for any aggression against it and calls on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to implement fully Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and to halt its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty and its continuing threats against Lebanon, its people and infrastructure;
- The Lebanese Government is most solicitous that the international community should succeed in lifting the siege imposed on Gaza, thereby underscoring the importance of implementing international law. Building on that success, the international community could then make a sincere effort to advance the process aimed at achieving a comprehensive and just peace. That process is of vital importance to achieving peace in our region and throughout the world.

(*Signed*) Ali Hussein **Al-Chami**
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants